

EXCISE

30
INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

POL 14 VIETS
SOC 12-1 VIET
POL 27 VIET

SECRET

013887

12
Action

SS
Info

RR RUENG -
DE RUMVIR 25648/1 1340350
ZNY SSSSS
R 140000Z MAY 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO RUENG/SECSTATE WASHDC
INFO RUMJDH/AMCONSUL HONG KONG
RUHHQA/CINCPAC
STATE GRNC
BT

1967 MAY 14 AM 12 3

SECRET SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 25648

LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

HONG KONG FOR GARD

REF: A) STATE 183902 B) SAIGON 22183 C) SAIGON 21427

SUBJ: THE "PEACE ISSUE" AND THE MILITANT BUDDHISTS

1. REF A RAISES RELATED BUT SEPARATE QUESTIONS OF MILITANT BUDDHIST ACTIVITIES AND PEACE AS AN ISSUE IN THE COMING PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN. FOLLOWING IS OUR CURRENT ASSESSMENT THESE TOPICS.

2. THE PEACE ISSUE. (A) THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE DEEPLY DESIRE AN END TO THE WAR, AND A CAMPAIGN BASED ON THE PROMISE OF PEACE WOULD HAVE GREAT APPEAL. THE CANDIDATES ARE WELL AWARE OF THIS FACT, AND PEACE IS THEREFORE AT LEAST POTENTIALLY A HIGHLY IMPORTANT ISSUE IN THE CAMPAIGN.

(B) PEACE IS ALSO A DIFFICULT ISSUE TO USE IN THE CAMPAIGN. IT COULD OPEN A CANDIDATE TO CHARGES THAT HE IS ADVOCATING SURRENDER. THERE ARE POWERFUL AND WELL-ORGANIZED GROUPS, IN PARTICULAR THE MILITARY AND THE CATHOLIC REFUGEES, WHO WILL DEMAND THAT PEACE BE PHRASED ONLY IN TERMS OF VICTORY OVER THE COMMUNISTS. THESE GROUPS ARE LIKELY TO MEET ANY OTHER FORMULATION OF THE PEACE ISSUE WITH CHARGES OF AID AND COMFORT TO THE ENEMY. (THIS KIND OF RESPONSE IS ALSO LIKELY TO BE INSTIGATED AND DIRECTED BY GENERAL LOAN, WHO MIGHT WELL USE THE POLICE FOR THE PURPOSE UNLESS HE IS INSTRUCTED TO THE CONTRARY BY KY.)

(C) THE MILITARY WILL PROBABLY TRY TO KEEP THE

SECRET

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY Handley DATE 10/6/81
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

SECRET

-2- SAIGON 25648 MAY 14, 1967, SECTION 1 of 2

PEACE ISSUE IN THE CONTEXT OF UNITING THE NATION FOR A SUCCESSFUL PROSECUTION OF THE WAR. GENERAL THIEN IN A NUMBER OF SPEECHES HAS SPOKEN OF AN EARLY VICTORY AND THE NECESSITY OF SHORTENING THE WAR. THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO BEEN AT PAINS IN RECENT WEEKS TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE PUBLICLY IN SEEKING NEGOTIATIONS, I.E. THE POSITIVE RESPONSE TO THE U THANT, CEYLONESE AND THE CANADIAN PROPOSALS. THIS WILL ENABLE THE MILITARY CANDIDATE TO SAY THAT THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT HAS EXPLORED EVERY POSSIBILITY THAT MIGHT LEAD TO A JUST AND HONORABLE PEACE. (C) CIVILIAN CANDIDATES WILL PROBABLY FEEL CONSTRAINED TO TREAD LIGHTLY IN HANDLING THE PEACE ISSUE BECAUSE OF THE HAZARDS NOTED IN (B). DESPITE THESE HAZARDS, IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT SOME CIVILIAN CANDIDATES WILL AT LEAST MAKE GENERAL STATEMENTS TO THE EFFECT THAT THEY CAN AND WILL BRING AN HONORABLE PEACE TO THE NATION AND THAT THEY WILL DO SO FASTER AND BETTER THAN THE PRESENT MILITARY AUTHORITIES. SUCH A STANCE WOULD BE LIKELY TO PROVE ATTRACTIVE TO THE VOTERS EVEN THOUGH THE MORE SOPHISTICATED WOULD WANT TO KNOW HOW THE CANDIDATE PROPOSED TO MAKE GOOD ON HIS PROMISE.

PAGE 4 RUMJIR 25648/1 S E C R E T

(C) IT IS POSSIBLE, THOUGH LESS LIKELY, THAT ONE OR MORE OF THE CIVILIAN CANDIDATES WILL MAKE MORE SPECIFIC PEACE APPEALS. THIS COULD BE DONE IN EITHER PUBLIC SPEECHES AND PUBLIC MEDIA SUCH AS NEWSPAPERS OR BY WORD OF MOUTH. IT IS NOW TOO EARLY TO PREDICT, HOWEVER, THE FORM WHICH SUCH PROPOSALS MIGHT TAKE. (WE NOTE [REPORT ON HUONG'S EXPECTATION THAT THE NLF WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE POST PEACE GOVERNMENT. THIS DOES NOT SOUND LIKE THE SORT OF COMMENT WE MIGHT EXPECT FROM HUONG, BUT IF TRUE IT SUGGESTS THAT THE PEACE ISSUE AND NATIONAL RECONCILIATION MIGHT BE VERY SPECIFICALLY HANDLED BY SOME CANDIDATES.]

3. AN ALTERNATIVE ISSUE. (A) IF THE CANDIDATES FIND THE PEACE ISSUE TOO SENSITIVE TO APPROACH DIRECTLY, THEY MAY TRY TO PHRASE IT IN TERMS OF THE AMERICAN PRESENCE. THERE IS SOME FEELING HERE THAT THE COMMUNISTS AND THE FREE WORLD ARE USING VIET-NAM AS A BATTLEGROUND, AND THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE ARE BEING MADE TO SUFFER FOR THE CAUSE OF THE WHOLE FREE WORLD. THEY MIGHT, FOR INSTANCE, SUGGEST THAT THE WAR COULD BE ENDED--AND VIET-NAM TAKEN OUT OF IT--IF THE AMERICANS WERE TO ATTACK THEIR TRUE

b-1
ec

SECRET

SECRET

-3- SAIGON 25648 MAY 14, 1967, SECTION 1 OF 2

ENEMY, COMMUNIST CHINA, DIRECTLY INSTEAD OF THROUGH VIET-NAM. WE HAVE SEEN NO SIGNS OF THIS SPECIFIC LINE EMERGING AS YET.

(B) THE MAJOR CANDIDATES WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT CALL DIRECTLY FOR THE REMOVAL OF THE AMERICAN PRESENCE. ON THE CONTRARY THEY WILL PROBABLY EXPRESS GRATITUDE FOR AMERICAN HELP. BUT IT WILL BE TEMPTING TO CRITICIZE AND COMPLAIN ABOUT THE WAY IN WHICH AMERICAN HELP IS EXTENDED AND THE UNDESIRABLE SIDE EFFECTS OF OUR AID. GENERALIZED REFERENCES TO PRESERVING VIETNAMESE SOVEREIGNTY AND ESTABLISHING REAL INDEPENDENCE ARE ALMOST CERTAIN TO FIGURE IN CAMPAIGN ORATORY. THERE WILL PROBABLY ALSO BE COMPLAINTS ABOUT PROSTITUTION, THE IMPORTATION OF FOREIGN LABOR, AND INFLATION. SOME MAY SAY THAT AMERICAN AID HAS CREATED EXPENSIVE CONSUMER HABITS WHILE FAILING TO CREATE THE LOCAL INDUSTRY NECESSARY TO SUPPORT SUCH A LEVEL OF LIVING. THERE MAY WELL BE DIRECT STATEMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT THE NEGOTIATION OF PEACE MUST BE DONE BY THE VIETNAMESE, NOT BY THE AMERICANS.

PAGE 6 RUMJIR 25648/1 S E C R E T

4. RESTRAINTS. (A) WE DO NOT ANTICIPATE AT THIS TIME THAT ANY OF THE MAJOR CANDIDATES WILL USE THE ABOVE ISSUES IN SUCH A WAY AS TO SERIOUSLY THREATEN THE WAR EFFORT OR THE CONTINUATION OF GOOD US-VIETNAMESE WORKING RELATIONS. THIS IS BECAUSE IN THE FIRST INSTANCE ALL OF THE MAIN CANDIDATES ARE RESPONSIBLE AND PATRIOTIC LEADERS. SECONDLY, THEY KNOW VERY WELL THEIR OWN PROBABLE FATE IF THE COMMUNISTS WERE TO GET CONTROL OF SOUTH VIET-NAM, AND THEY WANT TO AVOID GIVING ANY HELP TO THE VIET CONG FOR THAT REASON. FINALLY, THEY ARE AWARE OF THE NEED FOR POST-ELECTION COOPERATION WITH US AS WELL AS FOR THE VOICES OF THE MILITARY AND THE MILITANT CATHOLICS; THEY KNOW THAT IRRESPONSIBLE USE OF THE ABOVE ISSUES COULD EASILY TURN THE CATHOLICS AND MILITARY AND PERHAPS OTHERS AGAINST ANY CANDIDATE. (B) THERE ARE, HOWEVER, LEADERS AND GROUPS WHICH MAY TRY TO AGITATE THE ABOVE ISSUES IN A DESTRUCTIVE WAY. OF REMOST AMONG THESE ARE TRI QUANG AND THE MILITANT AN QUANG BUDDHISTS.

BUN*ER

SECRET

INCOMING TELEGRAM *Department of State*

SECRET

12
Action

55
Info

R 140300Z MAY 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC
INFO RUMJDH/AMCONSUL HONG KONG
RUHHHQA/CINCPAC
STATE GRNC
BT

013892

1367 MAY 14 AM 1 41

SECRET SECTION 2 OF 2 SAIGON 25648

LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

HONG KONG FOR GARD

5. MILITANT BUDDHIST ACTIVITY. (A) THE CONTINUING EFFORT OF THE AN QUANG CLIQUE TO BREATHE NEW LIFE INTO THE "STRUGGLE" WAS REPORTED IN REF. C. THERE IS EVIDENTLY NO RPT NO IMPORTANT CHANGE IN MILITANT ATTITUDES, THOUGH THEIR INTENTION TO USE THE PEACE ISSUE IS NOW QUITE CLEAR. THEY REMAIN DETERMINED TO OVERTHROW THE KY REGIME, AND THEY MAINTAIN A STRONGLY ANTI-AMERICAN POSTURE.

(B) IN ADDITION TO COMMENTS BY KNOWLEDGEABLE VIETNAMESE ABOUT THE PRESENT ATTITUDE OF THE MILITANTS, WE HAVE RECENTLY OBTAINED A NUMBER OF AN QUANG DOCUMENTS. ONE OF THESE, THIEN HOA'S SPEECH FOR BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY, MAKES IT CLEAR THAT THE MILITANTS HAVE NOT CHANGED THEIR TUNE. THIEN HOA WRITES, FOR EXAMPLE, "AFTER THE LAST CAMPAIGN, PUBLIC OPINION COULD SAY THAT OUR CHURCH WAS NOT WELL ORGANIZED, THAT IT LACKED CADRES AND EXPERIENCE, BUT NO ONE COULD SAY THAT OUR POLICY WAS WRONG, OUR STAND NOT UPRIGHT, OR THAT WE DID NOT HAVE A DESERVING CAUSE AND SUPPORTERS. WE HAVE NOT YET SUCCEEDED AS WE WISHED, BUT IT CANNOT BE SAID THAT WE HAVE FAILED." (THE SPLIT IN THE BUDDHIST MOVEMENT BETWEEN THE MILITANTS AND THE TAM CHAU GROUP IS BRUSHED ASIDE BY THIEN HOA AS A "SKIN DISEASE WHICH THOUGH REPULSIVE IS EASIER TO DETECT AND CURE THAN AN INTERNAL DISEASE.")

(C) IN ANOTHER AN QUANG DOCUMENT ISSUED FOR BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY, THE MILITANTS LINK THEIR PEACE THEME WITH THE AMERICAN PRESENCE IN A WAY WHICH MAY INDICATE FUTURE STRATEGY "THE WAR BECOMES MORE AND MORE BLOODY. THE COUNTRYSIDE IS IN RUINS, OUR SOCIETY AND OUR SPIRITUAL HERITAGE ARE SINKING INTO DECAY. WE WANT PEACE, BUT WE CANNOT HAVE PEACE WITHOUT INDEPENDENCE. IN REALITY, WHAT DO WE SEE AT PRESENT? WE BECOME MORE

b-1
ec

SECRET

03:15:00:00:00

SECRET
DECLASSIFIED

-2- SAIGON 25648 140300Z MAY 67 SECTION 2 OF 2

AND MORE DEPENDENT IN EVERY FIELD: MILITARY, POLITICAL, DIPLOMATIC AND ECONOMIC. IT IS A BLATANT DEPENDENCE THAT NOTHING CAN COVER UP. AN AMERICAN FREIGHTER TRANSPORTING RICE FAILS TO ARRIVE ON TIME, AND THE PRICE OF RICE VISIBLY INCREASES!"

(D) ON THE PEACE ISSUE, THIEN HOA SAYS DIRECTLY THAT "ANOTHER IMPORTANT TASK WHICH OUR CHURCH IS UNDERTAKING IS THE RESTORATION OF PEACE FOR THE COUNTRY. MAM WHILE THE NATION IS THREATENED WITH DESTRUCTION BY AN ATROCIOUS WAR, THE BUDDHISTS WITH THEIR COMPASSIONATE NATURE AND THEIR ETERNAL LOVE FOR PEACE CANNOT STAND STILL AND WATCH THE BOMBS AND HATRED DESTROY THEIR COUNTRY." IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND IN THE DOCUMENTS RECENTLY ISSUED, THICH TINH KHiet AND THICH THIEN HOA ALSO TAKE CREDIT FOR THE BUDDHA BIRTHDAY CEASE-FIRE, SPEAKING OF IT AS A DIRECT RESULT OF THEIR REQUEST. (THE INTENTION IS EVIDENTLY TO MAKE IT APPEAR THAT THEY HAVE THE POWER TO FORCE THE GOVERNMENT TO BOW TO THEIR DEMANDS.) THEY CALL THE ONE DAY TRUCE "PRECIOUS" BUT "FAR TOO SHORT" AND NOTE THAT CHRIST'S BIRTHDAY WAS MARKED BY A TWO-DAY TRUCE. THEY CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE TO AGITATE FOR AN EXTENSION OF THE TRUCE.

(E) THE AN QUANG MILITANTS HAVE ISSUED A CALL FOR ALL PAGODAS TO OBSERVE A WEEK OF PRAYERS FOR PEACE PRIOR TO BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY. THEY HAVE ALSO CALLED ON THE FAITHFUL TO FAST AND ATTEND LECTURES AT THE PAGODAS DURING THIS PERIOD. (THE MODERATES UNDER TAM CHAU ARE ALSO PLANNING A WEEK-LONG CELEBRATION.) ACCORDING TO ONE MODERATE BONZE, (

THE MILITANTS HOPE TO GENERATE "DEMONSTRATIONS AND RIOTS" AT THEIR PRAYER MEETINGS AND LECTURES.

(F) WE ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT THE REPORTS OF MILITANT INTENTIONS TO LAUNCH PEACE DEMONSTRATIONS ARE TRUE. WE HAVE SUCH REPORTS NOT ONLY FROM

BUT ALSO FROM GOVERNMENT SOURCES. THE ESTIMATE OF SOME OF THESE SOURCES, HOWEVER, IS THAT EITHER THE MILITANTS WILL BE UNABLE TO START SUCH DEMONSTRATIONS OR THAT THE DEMONSTRATIONS WILL BE SMALL AND WILL POSE NO SERIOUS THREAT TO PUBLIC ORDER OR THE PROSECUTION OF THE WAR. WE ARE INCLINED TO CONCUR IN THIS JUDGMENT. SUCH DEMONSTRATIONS WOULD BE MOST LIKELY TO TAKE PLACE IN HUE, DANANG, DALAT, AND SAIGON, AND AUTHORITIES IN ALL THOSE CITIES SEEM TO HAVE THE SITUATION WELL IN HAND. OUR PEOPLE IN HUE CONTINUE TO REPORT THAT THE MILITANT BUDDHISTS THERE LACK THE POPULAR SUPPORT REQUIRED TO START ANY REAL TROUBLE.

(G) MILITANT BUDDHIST STRATEGY WITH REGARD TO THE ELECTIONS IS NOT YET CLEAR. THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT THEY WILL COVERTLY SUPPORT ANY CANDIDATE WHO

SECRET

DECLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED

SECRET

-3- SAIGON 25648 140300Z MAY 67 SECTION 2 OF 2

APPEARS ABLE TO DEFEAT THE MILITARY CANDIDATE WHILE PUBLICLY CONTINUING TO MAINTAIN THEIR LINE THAT THE CONSTITUTION AND THE ELECTIONS UNDER IT ARE ILLEGAL. IF THEIR CANDIDATE WINS, THEY CAN THUS CLAIM SOME CREDIT FOR HIS VICTORY; IF HE LOSES, THEY CAN CONTINUE TO SAY THAT THE ELECTION IS A FRAUD. REPORTS THAT THEY MEAN TO SUPPORT HUONG MAY THUS BE TRUE WITHOUT SIGNALING ANY REAL CHANGE IN THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CONSTITUTION AND ELECTIONS. (IN THIS REGARD IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT HUONG'S CAMPAIGN MANAGER, VO LONG TRIEU, RECENTLY REMARKED THAT SEEKING AND PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGING THE SUPPORT OF THE MILITANTS IS ONE THING, BUT IT IS QUITE DIFFERENT TO GET THEIR SUPPORT UNSOLICITED. WE KNOW THAT TRIEU WAS NEGOTIATING WITH TRAN QUANG THUAN SOME TIME AGO, SOME ARE INCLINED TO INTERPRET THIS REMARK AS A SIGN THAT THE MILITANTS PLAN TO SUPPORT HUONG, BUT THAT HUONG DOES NOT INTEND TO ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR SUPPORT PUBLICLY.)

6. TAM CHAU'S POSITION. (A) TAM CHAU CONTINUES TO FOLLOW A POSITIVE AND MODERATE LINE IN STARK CONTRAST TO THAT OF THE MILITANTS. HIS IS CONSTRUCTIVE THOUGH ESSENTIALLY BUDDHIST POLICY. IN RECENT WEEKS HE HAS CALLED PUBLICLY ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS FOR FULL BUDDHIST PARTICIPATION IN THE COMING ELECTIONS. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE ALSO CONTINUES TO CALL FOR THE RELEASE OF ALL THE "STRUGGLERS" STILL IN JAIL. (ACCORDING TO THE LOCAL PRESS, THE GOVERNMENT HAS RESPONDED TO A RECENT LETTER FROM TAM CHAU ON THIS SUBJECT BY PROMISING THAT SOME PRISONERS WILL BE RELEASED ON THE OCCASION OF BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY.) TAM CHAU ALSO CALLED FOR A TRUCE ON BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY, AND HAS ANNOUNCED HE WILL GIVE A SERMON "APPEAL FOR CEASEFIRE" MAY 16.

(B) THE QUESTION OF THE TAM CHAU CHARTER (SAIGON 21111) REMAINS UNRESOLVED. RECENTLY TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT THE CHARTER IS NOW BEFORE GENERAL THIEU. ACCORDING TO KY TOLD TAM CHAU THAT HE PASSED THE CHARTER TO THIEU WITH A FAVORABLE RECOMMENDATION, BUT THIEU IS SITTING ON IT. WHILE THIS MAY WELL BE TRUE--TAM CHAU IS CERTAINLY CLOSER TO KY THAN TO THIEU, AND THIEU MAY SEE TAM CHAU AS ONE OF THOSE WHO SUPPORT KY AS THE MILITARY CANDIDATE--FEELS THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS FOLLOWING A POLICY OF DELIBERATELY KEEPING THE MODERATES HOPING AND WAITING. HE FEARS THAT THE GOV HAS NO INTENTION OR RECOGNIZING THE TAM CHAU CHARTER.

BUNKER
BT

DECLASSIFIED

SECRET